

Delawareonline

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Our Readers' Views

04/21/2005

Public lands along C&D canal among last accessible for hunting and fishing

U.S. Reps. Michael Castle of Delaware and Wayne Gilchrist of Maryland are requesting funds from Congress to provide public recreational activities on lands bordering the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal. Funds would be used to construct golf courses, athletic fields, all-terrain-vehicle and horseback riding trails, hiking and biking paths, parking lots, and maintenance buildings.

For the past 29 years, the Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife has leased these lands from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, providing opportunities for residents to hunt, fish and train dogs within short driving distances from home. While the congressmen's proposal is laudable, a significant amount of wildlife habitat and public hunting area would be lost.

The Chesapeake & Delaware Canal consists of approximately 4,900 acres of habitat for birds and waterfowl, insects, rodents and reptiles, large and small game.

Delaware hunters and fisherman cannot continue to watch the rapid development of open space in our state proceed unabated. Hunting on private lands is almost non-existent. Public hunting areas are turning hunters away on weekends and holidays.

I remember hunting, fishing, and trapping Cherry Island Marsh, Naamans Woods, both sides of the Concord Pike, and the Canal Wildlife Area when I lived in Wilmington. The Canal Wildlife Area is the last public area north of the canal where a person can hunt, fish, or train hunting dogs. During the hunting season, 1,400 hunters use the area. More than 50,000 fishermen fish the canal and adjacent ponds throughout the year.

I have told many acquaintances that my two sons learned more about patience and other virtues from a duck blind, deer stand or fishing boat than from a television, computer or textbook.

It is important that a significant portion of the area in question be preserved in its undeveloped state for present and future generations. A public meeting on the topic is to be held from 4 to 8 p.m. April 25 at Gunning Bedford Middle School, 801 Cox Neck Road, Delaware City. Hunters, fisherman, and individuals concerned about preserving wildlife habitat are welcome to stop in at any time during the meeting to comment.

John W. Stewart, member, Advisory Council of the Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife, Lewes